



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 406

Prenatal and Infant Care Coordination - Grant Funding and Task Force

TO: Chair Kelley, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Demaune A. Millard, President & CEO, Family League of Baltimore
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Family League of Baltimore (Family League) supports Senate Bill 406 - Prenatal and Infant Care Coordination Grant Funding and Task Force. Currently, multiple sources of federal, state, local, and private funding support an array of maternal, infant, and early childhood programs and services. However, it is often the coordination of these services that is most challenging. Funding and developing a robust Thrive by Three Fund has the potential to transform existing public and private programs and resources into an integrated system of care.

Our work has demonstrated first-hand how coordinated care and services can impact the health of our youngest children. In 2009, Baltimore City had one of the worst rates of infant mortality in the country — 128 babies died before their first birthdays in that year alone. Black babies were five times more likely to die than White babies. The city struggled to address the two leading causes of infant mortality: babies born too soon and too small, and babies dying in their sleep.

In response, leaders from the government, nonprofit, academic, community, and corporate sectors came together to launch B'more for Healthy Babies. This initiative, led by the Baltimore City Health Department with Family League of Baltimore and HealthCare Access Maryland, works to improve policies and services and mobilizes community members in comprehensive approaches that support mothers, babies, and families. Today, the gap between Black and White infant deaths has closed by 50 percent, the infant mortality rate has declined by 38 percent, and teen births have declined by 36 percent.

A robust Thrive by Three fund would create a source of care coordination dollars to support efforts to align services and navigate systems to help educate people about health benefits, link them to health care providers and other services, and refer them to long-term case management. Having a robust care coordination system supports responsible use of public resources by ensuring that eligible pregnant women and women with infants get connected to the life-saving services and supports they need.

As the designated Local Management Board for the City of Baltimore, Family League's mission is to serve as an architect of change by promoting data-driven, collaborative initiatives and aligning resources to create lasting outcomes for children, families and communities. This work is guided by the State's Child Well-being Results Areas. We support SB 406 in particular due to its alignment with these result areas by working to ensure that "Babies are Born Healthy," "Children are Healthy," and "Families are Safe and Economically Stable."¹

For more information contact Matt Quinlan, Public Policy Manager: mquinlan@familyleague.org

¹ Maryland Governor's Office for Children. "Maryland's Child Well-Being Scorecard." <https://goc.maryland.gov/reportcard/>